

TOM FOLKMAN

Torn Folkman, grown religious, took the faith
His fathers knew and lived by through the ages
When men believed in witch and elf and wraith,
Both fools and sages.

As they believed it then, Tom Folkman thought
He could believe it now, if he were daring;
He studied Scripture daily while he sought
to find his bearing.

It seemed to him that he must follow in
The footsteps of the Master if he wanted
To win the gates of Heaven safe from sin,
With soul undaunted.

He wished to be baptized as Jesus was,
And heard from preachers this was needed sorely needed;
To be baptized the wrong way broke the laws,
Left prayer unheeded.

The choice of church to join was worth much care:
One sect was right, the others but a prison;
Choose wrongly, and he'd fail to dwell Up There
With Christ arisen.

His heart was set upon an unmarred soul,
On an eternal life, by emulation
Of Moses, Christ and all the saintly roll
Of Heaven's nation.

He found a text which seemed to indicate
How Jesus had been baptized in the river;

He found the sect which seemed the one True Gate,
The soul's Life-giver.

He put aside all greed and filled his heart
With love, his mind with lore and old tradition;
To do all things as saints did was his art,
His one ambition.

He trod for years in footsteps of the saints,
Ate locusts and wild honey ,wore hair clothing,
And looked on heresy and worldly taints
With pain and loathing.

In lonely hours he set. to work with books
To make complete his meagre education,
And spent much time in unfrequented nooks.
In meditation.

He read old manuscripts and ancient lore,
Wrote elder English with a fine full flourish,
And let the thought of Heaven's open door
His good soul nourish.

But when his days were spent and death was near,
He learned a truth which left his soul unsettled:
One saintly practice he had not held dear,
And he was nettled.

Late scholarship (Will ignorance excuse?)
His hope of Heaven's ageless life had stolen --

He learned, too late, that Moses did not use
The semicolon.

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